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SHEKELS.

THE SHEKEL, as everyone well knows, was an old Hebrew silver coin, though the shekel with which Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah was a weight—probably in the form of a lamb. The *coin* began to be made about 1130 B. C. The type on the reverse side is supposed to represent either Aaron's rod budding or a native lily, while the chalice on the obverse side is usually called the pot of manna. Its value was between fifty and sixty cents, and its purchasing power was ten times as great as now.

To day, however, we are not considering the actual shekel, but the word in its broad sense of *money*, and in this case

we will take the Bible term to stand for *Christian Giving*. An unpopular subject I am painfully aware, and one which many people think has a disagreeable habit of appearing in some form or other at every Missionary meeting ever held. They will patiently listen to everything else, but when the financial side is mentioned will exclaim, "O, don't talk about money. It is give, give all the time, and I am tired of this continual begging." How can this unhappy state of affairs be accounted for? Dr. Thomas Marshall says that the Presbyterian Church has in round numbers 1,000,000 members, and in all that constitutes wealth, comfort and thrift, is one of the richest churches in the country. The times are hard, yet its members are among the best clothed, best sheltered, best fed, and have the most silver and gold and precious things of any people who ever lived in any age of the world, so it cannot be poverty that checks the giving. Some writer who has studied the matter gives the following sad reason: "The diminution of missionary enthusiasm is owing to the increasingly secularized temper of the

church itself. Worldliness is its crying sin." This is a harsh and sweeping accusation, in which we fear there is not a little truth. Another reason is—people fail to realize that giving is an act of Christian worship. The Christian Missionary says: "The giving of earthly possessions—either property or money—is mentioned more than two hundred times in God's written word. Prayer is mentioned only a few more times than this. The two are joined together as a part of Christian worship and service. Money then is an important part in carrying out the command of the Lord which comes to us with distinctness and stress."

All through the Old and New Testaments are such commands as these. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase," and you know Jesus said, "If ye love Me keep My commandments." In these days we hear much of tithing, and on this subject I have quoted from Dr. Gordon, an eminent Baptist minister. "A tenth of his income was required of the Jew to be set apart and sacredly devoted to God's treasury. This was

the *first* tenth and not the *last* tenth. The *first fruits*, not the *dregs and leavings*."

While the amount is not specified in the New Testament the same principle is carried over: "Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by in store as God hath prospered him." Here is *proportionate giving*—"as God hath prospered him." Ought the proportion to be any less under the gospel than under the law? Surely not, when we remember that we have as our exemplar One, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty might be rich," and that we have the precept of this exemplar which no ingenuity can explain away—"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath shall not be My disciple."

In the light of such high standards who can say that we ought not to give at least one-tenth of our income to the Lord? If any Christian who has never tried it will make the experiment, conscientiously following the plan to the end, in prosperity and adversity, we predict for him two surprises. First, he

will be astonished at the increased amount which he is enabled by this method to give to the Lord; and secondly, he will be astonished at the increased spiritual and temporal prosperity which the Lord will give to him. For observe that here is an instance where the Lord actually makes a challenge to His people, and sets up a test case, saying, "Prove me now."

"Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom." Do you believe these words of our Lord, and can we question that they refer to abundant temporal returns in recompense for abundant giving?

Some months ago there was established under the United Society of Christian Endeavor what is called the Tenth Legion, which is "an enrollment of all Christians that make it a practice, in return for God's goodness to them, to give

to His work one-tenth of their income." The enrollment has now reached 11,350 and it is rapidly growing. Testimonies from members tell of increasing joy in giving, as well as of temporal prosperity.

Right here it seems admissible to touch upon that delicate and much discussed question of raising money for religious purposes by some other method than that of giving it outright to the Lord. Being an act of worship it ought to be freely rendered—without compulsion or bribing with candy, or oysters, or ice cream. The church and its enterprises ought to be *supported* by *its own members* without any cringing beseechings of the outside world. The raising of money for the cause of God by means of fairs and festivals and other devices to get something from the world, puts the Church in a false and bad attitude before the world. What would be thought of children who had received everything from their mother, planning a festival to support her in her old age, and in order to get something from the Smiths and Browns to help out their own stingi-

ness? Some years ago Emily Huntington Miller, at Chautauqua, New York, illustrated by supposing that Abraham, having discovered that the Lord's altar needed some repairs, had told Sarah to go out to the cross-roads to sell cakes in the name of the Lord to the Egyptians and others. She would have rebuked his mean soul and told him to give the money, or do the work himself.

Neither the Tabernacle nor Temple was built by this means, nor was any Old Testament service so supported. On the contrary, the early Christians never dreamed of asking the world to help support the Church. In Genesis we read of Abraham speaking thus to the King of Sodom who offered his assistance: "I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread to a shoe latch, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldst say—I have made Abraham rich." Turning over to Ezra we read: "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple

less than *thirteen billion dollars*. In that same *year* they gave *one thirty-second part of one per cent* of this to evangelize the heathen. In the United States there are annually spent *two billion dollars on liquor and tobacco, four hundred millions on popular amusements, twenty-five millions on kid gloves and feathers*. As much money is spent in soul-destroying liquor in *twenty-seven days*, and puffed away in tobacco smoke in *fifty-four days* as has been spent on missions in *eighty years*. The people of the United States spend as much in *one year* on *chewing gum* as is given in *four years* for the spread of Christianity. Christian women spend *twenty times* as much on *jewelry* as they give to save their suffering sisters for whom Christ died.

A number equal to half the population of our nation die every year without Christ, yet we are commanded to preach the Gospel to every creature. Dr. Marshall says that if every member of our Church would give one cent for every working day in the year, it would put more money into the Treasury of our

Boards than they have ever been or handled in any one year as coming from the Churches.

If the Christians of America gave as the Jews gave, their gifts to the Lord's work would annually amount to $1,166,000,000 and if only five per cent. of this were given to Missions, we would have $58,000,000 from America with which to give the Gospel to those who "sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death."

The Earl of Shaftesbury asserted that "during the latter part of these eighteen centuries it has been in the power of those who hold the Truth, having means enough, having knowledge enough, and having opportunity enough to evangelize the globe fifty times over."

May it be the earnest and constant prayer of every Christian woman that God will bring her to that high plane where she can truthfully say with that noble servant of God, David Livingstone: "I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ. If anything I have will advance the interests of that King-

dom it shall be given or kept, as by giving or keeping it, I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes for time and eternity.

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